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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES
OF OUTER SPACE

DRAFT REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WORK OF ITS TWENTY-NINTH SESSION

Addendum

XII. OTHER MATTERS

A. International Space Year - 1992

1. The Subcommittee noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 46/45, has recommended that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its 1992 session, should dedicate at least one meeting to International Space Year. The Subcommittee expressed its appreciation to COSPAR and IAF for sponsoring and assisting in the organization of the special session on 24 February 1992 to celebrate International Space Year as described in paragraph ___ of the present report. The Subcommittee also expressed its appreciation to all those who contributed to the special session.

2. The Subcommittee took note of the proposed programme for the participation of the United Nations in ISY (A/AC.105/445 and Add.1-7) and noted that a guidebook describing the programme had been distributed to Member States. The Subcommittee noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 46/45, had urged Member States, international organizations and other funding sources to support the efforts of the United Nations in connection with International Space Year.

3. The Subcommittee noted that the participation of the United Nations in ISY was funded by voluntary contributions. The Subcommittee expressed its appreciation to the Member States and international organizations that had made voluntary contributions for this purpose or were planning to do so. The Subcommittee urged other Member States and international organizations to further support scientific and technical activities in cooperation with the United Nations as part of International Space Year.

4. The Subcommittee noted that a focus of international ISY activities was the use of space technology for studying and monitoring the environment. It also noted that the General Assembly, in resolution 46/45, had reiterated its recommendation that Member States, in planning their activities for ISY, should consider ways in which those activities could complement the efforts under way for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also planned for 1992. The Subcommittee noted the cooperation between the Outer Space Affairs Division and the Conference secretariat.

5. The Subcommittee noted the wide variety of national and international programmes being undertaken as part of International Space Year, including the activities being coordinated through the Space Agency Forum on International Space Year (SAFISY), COSPAR, IAF and ISPRS. It noted in particular the plans for the World Space Congress being organized jointly by COSPAR and IAF, including activities organized in cooperation with the United Nations. The Subcommittee also noted the importance of including all countries in those programmes and of planning activities that would continue beyond 1992. The Subcommittee heard a special presentation by an expert from Canada on the Global Change Encyclopedia being prepared for ISY as mentioned in paragraph ___ of the present report.

6. The Subcommittee requested the Secretariat to keep the Committee and the Subcommittee informed of further developments relating to this question.

B. Space and Earth environment

7. The Subcommittee noted that the General Assembly, in resolution 46/45, had recommended that more attention be paid to all aspects related to the protection and preservation of the outer space environment, especially those potentially affecting the Earth's environment. The Subcommittee also noted that the General Assembly had considered that it was essential that Member States pay more attention to the problem of collisions with space debris, and other aspects of space debris, and had called for the continuation of national research on that question and for the development of improved technology for the monitoring of space debris.

8. The Subcommittee noted that the General Assembly had considered that, to the extent possible, information relating to the question of space debris should be provided to the Subcommittee in order to allow it to follow that question more closely and had requested the Secretary-General to invite Member States to provide information on their national research on space debris to the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee took note of the information that had been submitted by Member States in response to that request and that was contained in document A/AC.105/510 and Add.1 to 3. The Subcommittee heard a special presentation on the subject by an expert from India, as mentioned in paragraph ___ of the present report.

9. The Subcommittee reaffirmed that there was a need for further research concerning space debris, for the development of improved technology for monitoring space debris and for the compilation and dissemination of data on space debris. It also noted the importance of reducing the generation of space debris, in particular debris resulting from explosions, and of identifying disposal orbits into which satellites could be placed at the end of their operational lifetime. It further noted the importance of international cooperation in addressing these issues.

10. The Subcommittee noted that the General Assembly, in resolution 46/45, had considered that space debris could be an appropriate subject for in-depth discussion by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in the future.

11. The Subcommittee agreed that information on national research on space debris should be provided to the Subcommittee, as in the past. This could be done through provision of working papers, interventions in the general debate and technical presentations by specialists from Member States and COSPAR and IAF.

12. Some delegations expressed the view that the question of space debris should be included on the Subcommittee's agenda at its next session, allowing for a general exchange of views and information. Other delegations, while recognizing the importance of the subject, expressed the view that such consideration was premature until further national research on the problem of space debris had been completed.

13. The Subcommittee took note of a working paper submitted by Poland (A/AC.105/C.1/L.181) calling for the preparation of a report on the preservation and protection of the outer space environment, especially activities potentially affecting the Earth environment.

14. The Subcommittee took note of a working paper submitted by Czechoslovakia (A/AC.105/C.1/L.184) concerning a definition of space debris and a possible format for the discussions relating to space debris in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subcommittees.

C. Other reports

15. The Subcommittee welcomed the annual reports of ESA (A/AC.105/506), WMO (A/AC.105/507), INTELSAT (A/AC.105/508), EUTELSAT (A/AC.105/509), INTERCOSMOS (A/AC.105/511) and INMARSAT (A/AC.105/512), and the preliminary version of the thirty-first report of ITU on telecommunication and the peaceful uses of outer space. The Subcommittee requested those organizations to continue to report on their work.

16. The Subcommittee expressed its appreciation to COSPAR for its report on the progress of space research during the period 1990-1991 (A/AC.105/502) and to IAF for its report on highlights in space technology and applications during 1991 (A/AC.105/503). The Subcommittee noted that these reports will be

published jointly for dissemination to a wider audience as suggested by the Subcommittee at its twenty-eighth session.

17. The Subcommittee noted with appreciation the participation in its session of representatives from United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and permanent observers, and found their statements and reports helpful in enabling the Subcommittee to fulfil its role as focal point for international cooperation in space.

D. Review of the future role and work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee

18. The Subcommittee recommended that the agenda of its thirtieth session include the following priority items:

(a) Consideration of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and the coordination of space activities within the United Nations system;

(b) Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82);

(c) Matters relating to remote sensing of the Earth by satellites including, inter alia, applications for developing countries;

(d) Use of nuclear-power sources in outer space.

19. The Subcommittee also recommended that the agenda of the thirtieth session include the following items:

(a) Questions relating to space transportation systems and their implications for future activities in space;

(b) Examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit; examination of its utilization and applications, including, inter alia, in the field of space communications, as well as other questions relating to space communications developments, taking particular account of the needs and interests of developing countries;

(c) Matters relating to life sciences, including space medicine;

(d) Progress in national and international space activities related to the Earth environment, in particular progress in the geosphere-biosphere (global change) programme;

(e) Matters relating to planetary exploration;

(f) Matters relating to astronomy;

(g) The theme fixed for special attention at the 1993 session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee: "Space-based communication: the expansion of current services and increased understanding of new systems and the services they will make possible".

20. The Subcommittee recommended that, regarding agenda item (g) in paragraph 19 above, COSPAR and IAF, in liaison with Member States, should be invited to arrange a symposium, with as wide a participation as possible, to be held during the first week of the Subcommittee's session, to complement discussions within the Subcommittee on the special theme.

21. With regard to the dates for the thirtieth session, the Subcommittee recommended that its session be scheduled from 16 to 26 February 1992.